

March 5, 2025

The Honorable Matt Klein, Chair
The Honorable Judy Seeberger, Vice Chair
Senate Committee on Commerce and Consumer Protection
Minnesota Senate
95 University Ave., W
St. Paul, MN 55155

RE: In support– SF 0974 Health insurance plans, medical assistance and MinnesotaCare coverage of power standing systems for wheelchairs requirement

Dear Chair Klein and Vice Chair Seeberger:

United Spinal Association is submitting this written testimony in support of **SFB 0974 – Coverage of power standing systems**. United Spinal, founded by paralyzed veterans in 1946 and, for over 75 years, has been dedicated to enhancing the quality of life of all people living with spinal cord injuries and disorders (SCI/D), paralysis, neurological conditions and other mobility disabilities, including disabled veterans, and providing support and information to loved ones, care providers and professionals. United Spinal represents 5.5 million wheelchair users across the country, has close to 70,000 members, 46 chapters, 119 support groups and more than 100 rehabilitation facilities and hospital partners nationwide. We also work collaboratively with the Spinal Cord Injury Model Systems and the Model Systems Knowledge Translation Center that provide specialized services, support and research in the field of SCI.

Standing systems, which enable Medicare beneficiaries with mobility disabilities, to perform or participate in Mobility Related Activities of Daily Living (“MRADLs”)—the standard for mobility device coverage under Medicare—are currently not covered by Medicare but need to be. United Spinal, as a steering committee member of the ITEM Coalition has requested that the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) formally open a national coverage analysis as expeditiously as possible to:

1. Establish a benefit category determination (“BCD”) that standing systems in power wheelchairs are “primarily medical in nature” and, therefore, covered durable medical equipment (“DME”) under the Medicare program, and
2. Explicitly recognize coverage of these systems as reasonable and necessary for beneficiaries with a medical or functional need for standing systems in Group 3 power wheelchairs in order to perform or participate in MRADLs in the home.

In a landmark decision in May 2023, CMS announced Medicare coverage for power seat elevation systems as an accessory to power wheelchairs to benefit Medicare beneficiaries with mobility disabilities. The coverage decision represents a major win for the disability community and years of advocacy by the ITEM Coalition and key national paralysis, disability, aging and clinical organizations.¹ Also, “[p]ower standing systems are integral for certain power wheelchair users, as acquiring a supported standing position regularly can maintain and even improve health for joint mobility, muscle tone, bone health, digestive function, and more,” said Cara Masselink, former Executive Director, Clinician Task Force. Power standing systems impact the health of Medicare beneficiaries by reducing mortality as well as maximizing both independence and comfort: truly life-changing for the disability community.

Thank you for Minnesota’s leadership on this important issue for Minnesotans with disabilities. Please do not hesitate to contact me, Alexandra Bennewith, Vice President, Government Relations at abennewith@unitedspinal.org with any questions.

Sincerely,

Alexandra Bennewith

Alexandra Bennewith, MPA
Vice President, Government Relations
Cc: Sen. Alice Mann (50, DFL)

¹ <https://www.powerslaw.com/medicare-covers-seat-elevation-for-medicare-beneficiaries-using-power-wheelchairs/>